

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A controlling device for commanding operating functions of a plurality of different appliances, comprising:

5 a function key activatable to cause a transmission of a command to one of the plurality of different appliances;

 wherein the function key is associated with a color that is representative of the one of the plurality of different appliances.

10 2. The controlling device as recited in claim 1, comprising a device mode key activatable to place the controlling device into a mode for primarily commanding operating functions of the one of the plurality of different appliances, wherein the device mode key is associated with the color that is representative of the one of the plurality of different appliances.

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3. The controlling device as recited in claim 1, wherein the function key is a hard key.

4. The controlling device as recited in claim 3, comprising an LED associated with the function key, the LED being illuminable in the color.

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5. The controlling device as recited in claim 4, wherein the LED is a multicolor LED.

6. The controlling device as recited in claim 1, wherein the function key is a displayed soft key.

7. The controlling device as recited in claim 6, wherein the function key is displayed
5 using the color.

8. The controlling device as recited in claim 6, wherein an area in the vicinity of the displayed function key is provided the color.

10 9. The controlling device as recited in claim 1, comprising an EL display having the function key which is illuminable in the color.

10. The controlling device as recited in claim 1, wherein the color is user-selectable.

15 11. The controlling device as recited in claim 1, wherein the color is predefined.

12. The controlling device as recited in claim 1, wherein the function key is lockable to the one of the plurality of different appliances across different device operating modes of the controlling device.

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13. The controlling device as recited in claim 1, wherein the controlling device accepts input that functions to designate the command to be transmitted in response to activation of the function key.

14. A method for using color to indicate a relationship between one of a plurality of appliances and a function key of a controlling device, comprising:

5 assigning to a function key an intended target appliance selected from the plurality of appliances such that activation of the function key will cause a transmission of a command to the intended target appliance; and

associating a color with the function key which is representative of the intended target appliance.

10 15. The method as recited in claim 14, wherein the controlling device comprises a device mode key activatable to place the controlling device into a mode for primarily commanding operating functions of the intended target appliance and the method comprises associating the color with the device mode key.

15 16. The method as recited in claim 14, wherein the function key is a hard key.

17. The method as recited in claim 16, comprising illuminating an LED having the color.

18. The method as recited in claim 17, wherein the LED is a multicolor LED.

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19. The method as recited in claim 14, wherein the function key is a displayed soft key.

20. The method as recited in claim 19, comprising displaying the function key using the color.

21. The method as recited in claim 19, comprising displaying an area visually linked to the function key using the color.

22. The method as recited in claim 14, comprising illuminating an EL display segment having the color.

23. The method as recited in claim 14, comprising accepting user input assigning the color to the intended target device.

24. The method as recited in claim 14, wherein the color is predefined.

25. The method as recited in claim 14, comprising accepting user input that functions to lock the function key across different device operating modes of the controlling device.

26. The method as recited in claim 14, comprising accepting user input that functions to display the color.

27. The method as recited in claim 14, comprising accepting user input that function to assign the intended target appliance to the function key.

28. A controlling device for commanding operating functions of a plurality of different appliances, comprising:

a function key activatable to cause a transmission of a command to an intended target appliance selected from the plurality of different appliances;

5 wherein one of a plurality of different visual cues is associated with the function key as a function of which of plurality of different appliances is selected as the intended target appliance.

29. The controlling device as recited in claim 28, comprising a device mode key

10 activatable to place the controlling device into a mode for primarily commanding operating functions of the intended target appliance and wherein the one of a plurality of different visual cues is also associated with the device mode key.

30. The controlling device as recited in claim 28, wherein the plurality of different visual

15 cues is selected from a group consisting of at least one of shapes, colors, patterns, brightnesses, icons, and text tags.

31. A method for using a visual cue to indicate a relationship between one of a plurality of appliances and a function key of a controlling device, comprising:

20 assigning to a function key an intended target appliance selected from the plurality of appliances such that activation of the function key will cause a transmission of a command to the intended target appliance; and

associating one of a plurality of different visual cues with the function key, the assigned one of the plurality of different visual cues being representative of the intended target appliance.

- 5 32. The method as recited in claim 31, wherein the controlling device comprises a device mode key activatable to place the controlling device into a mode for primarily commanding operating functions of the intended target appliance and the method comprises associating the one of the plurality of different visual cues with the device mode key.

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33. The method as recited in claim 31, wherein the plurality of different visual cues is selected from a group consisting of at least one of shapes, colors, patterns, brightnesses, icons, and text tags.

- 15 34. A controlling device for commanding operating functions of a plurality of different appliances, comprising:

 a function key activatable to cause a transmission of a command to an intended target appliance selected from the plurality of different appliances;

- wherein one of a plurality of different audio cues is associated with the function
20 key as a function of which of plurality of different appliances is selected as the intended target appliance.

35. The controlling device as recited in claim 34, wherein the different audio cues comprise audio signals having different frequencies.

36. The controlling device as recited in claim 34, wherein the different audio cues
5 comprise audio signals with an emitted tone that repeats in different numbers.

37. The controlling device as recited in claim 34, wherein the different audio cues comprise audio signals which have different sequences of tones.

10 38. A method for using cues to indicate a plurality of appliances, comprising:
associating with each of the plurality of appliances a unique cue;
presenting the unique cue associated with each of the plurality of appliances when
allowing a user to setup a recipient appliance to receive input from one of the plurality of
appliances; and
15 associating the unique cue with a function key of a controlling device to represent
the one of the plurality of appliances as an intended target for a transmission to be issued
from the controlling device in response to activation of the function key.

39. The method as recited in claim 38, wherein the recipient appliance transmits data
20 representative of the unique cue and associated appliance to the controlling device.

40. The method as recited in claim 39, wherein the controlling device automatically
associates the cue to the function key in response to receipt of the data.

41. The method as recited in claim 38, wherein the controlling device comprises a device mode key activatable to place the controlling device into a mode for primarily commanding operating functions of the one of the plurality of appliances and the method
5 comprises associating the cue with the device mode key.

42. The method as recited in claim 38, wherein the cue is selected from a group consisting of at least one of sounds, shapes, colors, patterns, brightnesses, icons, and text tags.
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43. The method as recited in claim 38, comprising providing a predetermined association between appliances and cues at a time of manufacture of the recipient appliance.

44. The method as recited in claim 38, comprising accepting user input into the recipient
15 device for providing an association between appliances and cues.